

CLINGMAN DONATES \$10,000 TO PARK EFFORT

National Land Heritage Trust also assists in purchase

(Merrimac, WI) - Evan and Joanne Clingman have committed a \$10,000 donation to the Town of Merrimac to assist in purchasing the property they are selling to the Town for park and recreation property on Lake Wisconsin. The donation will be used to memorialize the heritage of the Clingman family and their ownership of the property. In addition, the Board of Directors of the National Heritage Land Trust (NHLT) have committed to assist the Town with an additional \$45,000 conservation loan to help the Town close on the property by the end of September.

The donations by individuals has reached \$30,000. With the \$195,000 grant from the State of Wisconsin, the Town still needs to raise \$35,000 to complete the transaction. The NHLT is going to help cover this difference and the Town will pay back the organization as it continues its fundraising efforts. The town's goal is to raise private money for the balance of the purchase and would alleviate any need to raise tax revenues. This is an important part of the purchase considering the money needed for the purchase is currently about 40% of the town's current tax levy.

The township is purchasing approximately 7 acres of property currently owned by the Clingmans of Pennsylvania. The property has been in the Clingman family for years and was last resided upon in 1938. The natural surroundings create one of the oldest growth forests on Lake Wisconsin as well as one of the largest undeveloped shorelines on the lake. It is anticipated that the DNR will get the property adjacent to the Clingman property when the United States Army transfers the Badger Army Ammunition Plant (BAAP) properties as the plant has been closed. The DNR has already completed the purchase of the 3.5 acre parcel next to the BAAP pump house property. The town is now working to provide funding for the 8.5 acres it intends to purchase. The town plans hopes acquire an additional 5 acres for the park when Hwy. 78 is relocated in 2007.

Unlike other major lakes in Wisconsin, such as Castle Rock or Petenwell lakes, Lake Wisconsin does not have a major park area on the lake. Presently, there is a DNR boat ramp at Moon Valley Resort and a Sauk County boat ramp next to Summer Oaks Resort, but neither facility allows people to enjoy a nature hike or provide major access to on-shore fishing access.

Once the land is acquired, the town plans to work out an arrangement with the DNR to manage the property. Some of the early vision for the park shows the town's portion mainly being used for hiking trails and nature observation points. There would also be areas that provide excellent off-shore fishing opportunities in Weigand's Bay. When the Hwy. 78 is abandoned, it is possible the abandoned stretchy along the bay could be utilized for handicapped fishing. The DNR also has a long range vision of providing day camping sites and possibly boat access on it's portion. Throughout the bay, the DNR has also budgeted for improving the fish habitat with off shore reefs and fish cribs. DNR officials are cautious about their future plans as these projects take funding and might not be able to happen for several years.

The initiative of purchasing land by the Town of Merrimac for conservation is unique in that these projects are generally seen at the county or state level. The township's effort to conserve this property might be one of the first for a local township. While other municipalities (such as cities and villages) and counties often preserve park space it is rarely been seen at the township level. The DNR hopes the success of this project will encourage other townships to follow suit.

The town has authorized honoring those who make donations to this project by honoring them with a plaque or monument. Donations of \$500.00 or more will qualify for this recognition. Because the donation is being made to a government entity, as well as for park conservation,

donations are tax-deductible. Donors are asked to consult with their tax professional to make certain their donation is in fact eligible. Donations of any size are welcome.

If you would like to make a donation for this conservation project, you can make your check payable to the "Clingman Property Acquisition Fund - Town of Merrimac, Attn: Tim McCumber, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer, P.O. Box 115, Merrimac, WI 53561.

McCumber is available to speak to area groups or business and to answer any inquiries about the project. He can be contacted at (608) 643-6332 or by email at mccumber@shopstop.net. You can also view information and photos of the property at <http://www.tn.merrimac.wi.gov>.